

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1 Purpose

The Agency Files Maintenance and Records Disposition Handbook sets forth objectives, policy, responsibilities, and guidelines for administering a records disposition program for all offices as prescribed by Chapter 21, 29, 31, and 33 of Title 44 of the United States Code (U.S.C.).

2 General

Records are created in carrying out the program functions of an office. They document what the office has done in carrying out these responsibilities. The APHIS Files Maintenance and Records Disposition system considers these functions as the basis for identifying, arranging, and disposing of files. The system divides records into two separate records series, “administrative” and “program” or functional. The administrative series includes records of day-to-day internal “operations” and “housekeeping.” The program series generally corresponds with the functional responsibilities assigned. A good records system should be rejuvenated annually. Appropriate files are cut off annually and, where necessary, continuing case files are brought forward. At the same time, inactive records are either disposed of or sent to storage -- all according to file plan instructions. A new files maintenance plan is then established for each fiscal year. This annual cutoff, disposition, and maintenance plan will ensure an updated, ongoing system of files.

3 Laws and Authority

The Federal Records Act which is codified at Chapters 21, 29, 31, and 33 of Title 44, U.S.C., establishes that the Head of each Federal agency shall establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of the records of the agency. It also requires the Head of each Federal agency to make and preserve records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the Agency. The Paperwork Reduction Act, codified at Chapter 35 of Title 44, U.S.C., makes records management a part of a broader program of Federal information resources management. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has broad authority under Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) to set standards for the management of records, evaluate agency programs, preserve permanently valuable records and approve the destruction of temporary records. The General Services

Administration (GSA) records management regulations are located in Title 41 of the CFR in Chapter 20, Parts 201-2, 201-22, and 201-45.

4 Penalties

The theft, falsification, or mutilation of records is forbidden by law and is punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and imprisonment for up to three years, together with removal from office. (18 U.S.C. Section 2071.)

5 Policy

Official records created or received by offices are the property of the Federal Government. The Agency comprehensive records disposition schedule and the NARA General Records Schedules (GRS) contain official guidelines whose use is mandatory for the retention and disposition of records. The creation of additional instructions or changes to disposition schedules should not be made without prior approval of the APHIS Business Services (ABS), Forms, Issuances, and Records Management (FIRM), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Records Officer.

6 Delegation of Authority

Information Technology Services (ITS), Application and Information Management (AIM) is responsible for the development of the records management program required by NARA under 36 CFR, Part 1220.40, with authority to approve records disposition schedules and transfers of records to the custody of Federal Records Centers and/or the National Archives. ABS is delegated authority to approve subsequent changes and revisions to this Handbook.

This Handbook replaces any internal administrative office record guidelines that may be in use. Refer any questions or concerns to APHIS Business Services (ABS), Forms, Issuances, and Records Management (FIRM), Records Officer.